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SUBJECT: SOMALIA - President Address Parliament; Five Legislators
Expelled

¶1. (SBU) Summary: On July 27, the Transitional Federal Parliament re-convened for the first time since fighting broke out in Mogadishu at the beginning of May. TFG President Sharif addressed the legislative body in the Banadir region administrative headquarters in Mogadishu. Sharif stressed that despite their best efforts, anti-government groups have failed to overthrow his government and that the TFG has made notable political and military progress. He praised Somalia's armed forces for their commitment and Ahlu Sunna Wal Jama'a (ASWJ) for its fight against al-Shabaab in the central regions. During the session, the legislators voted to dismiss five MPs for absenteeism and "anti-national" behavior in violation of the Transitional Federal Charter. Another forty-nine MPs have been put on notice that they must return to Mogadishu within twenty days or be dismissed, as well. After President Sharif's departure, but while Parliament was still in session, several mortars were fired at the meeting location. No injuries were reported. End summary.

Parliament Re-Convenes
in New Headquarters

¶2. (SBU) On July 27, 301 of the estimated 350 TFG parliamentarians in Mogadishu re-convened for the first time since fighting broke out in Mogadishu at the beginning of May. The body met at the Banadir region administration headquarters in the Hamar-weyne district of Mogadishu. (From February to May, Parliament had met in the police transport headquarters in Abdiaziz district, which subsequently came under fire several times by anti-government groups. The Speaker told the media that the venue was changed because the police headquarters was old and lacked basic amenities, and not because of security concerns.)

President Sharif
Addresses Lawmakers

¶3. (SBU) During the session, TFG President Sheikh Sharif addressed the MPs, telling them that anti-government groups have failed to overthrow the government despite their best efforts. He listed the TFG's notable political and military achievements. He praised Somalia's armed forces for their commitment and Ahlu Sunna Wal Jama'a (ASWJ) for its fight against al-Shabaab in the central regions. Sharif also lauded AMISOM's efforts and said that an additional four thousand troops will be arriving soon from Uganda, Burundi, Sierra Leone, and Nigeria.

¶4. (SBU) Sharif left Parliament soon after finishing his speech. Shortly thereafter, several mortars were fired at the parliament building, causing the MPs to disperse. No injuries were reported.

Speaker Dismisses Five MPs

15. (SBU) During the session, the Parliament, chaired by Speaker Adan Mohammed Nur "Madobe," resolved to dismiss five of its deputies. "Madobe" said the dismissed members had violated the federal parliament's regulations and the Transitional Federal Charter. (In a subsequent interview, "Madobe" said that those dismissed had failed to attend consecutive sessions of Parliament for more than four months. He also implied that some of the MPs had violated the Charter by engaging in "anti-national" behavior.) Media reports indicate that "Madobe" stated, "These honorable members of Parliament have broken the laws of the federal government and we have decided to dismiss them, bearing in mind the current situation of the country and how they have been behaving." Some critics subsequently alleged that "Madobe" had singled out only those MPs who had publicly criticized him, and that many other absent MPs remained in office.

16. (SBU) The dismissed Members of Parliament are:

-- Ismail Hurreh "Bubah" (Isaak): former Minister of Foreign Affairs under former Prime Minister Gedi;

-- Sheikh Ahmed Mohammed "Madobe" (Ogaden): the former Islamic Court administration official in Kismaayo who has now joined Hisbul Islam;

-- Ali Bashi Haji Mohamud (Darod/Dublahante): a long-time active

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MP;

-- Ahmed Abdullahi Jama (Isaak);

-- Abdallah Haji Ali (Isaak): both Jama and Ali resigned on July 18 and returned to Somaliland. (Note: When Ali, a former Mayor of Berbera, returned to Somaliland on July 18, he was briefly detained by the Somaliland authorities for his activities in the TFG.).

Forty-Nine Others
Warned

17. (SBU) In addition to those who were dismissed, forty-nine other MPs, including former Prime Ministers Ali Gedi and Hassan Abshire, have been cited for absenteeism. The parliament secretary has reportedly issued warning letters to them and asked them to come to Mogadishu within twenty days or risk being expelled.

18. (SBU) Somalia's Ambassador to Kenya, Mohammed Nur "Americo," who returned from several days in Mogadishu on July 28, told Somalia Unit July 29 that Prime Minister Sharmarke, President Sharif, and Speaker "Madobe" have agreed to issue a letter over their signature that would request that the Government of Kenya revoke the visas of those MPs resident in Nairobi from among the list of forty-nine. "Americo" said he would present the letter, once received, to GOK Foreign Minister Wetangula. (Note: it is unlikely that the GOK would act energetically to remove the targeted MPs from Kenya.)

19. (SBU) In an interview following the July 27 session of Parliament, Speaker "Madobe" defended the decision to unseat the five MPs as having been taken in conformance with the Transitional Federal Charter. (Note: According to the Charter, if an MP is not present for four consecutive months of parliamentary sessions, s/he can be forced to relinquish his/her seat.) "Madobe" singled out former Foreign Minister "Bubah" for never having attended a session of Parliament and for having engaged in anti-national behavior. Former Prime Minister Ali Gedi, "Madobe" noted, had not attended a session since having ceased to be Prime Minister in November 2007. (Note: Gedi, and a group of MPs allied with him, have lobbied to have the Parliament re-locate to the safer precincts of Garowe (Puntland) or Hargeisa (Somaliland) Unlike "Bubah," who was

expelled, Gedi was only warned by Parliament.)

Comment

¶10. (SBU) The expulsion of five MPs, and the warning issued to the forty-nine others, follows the TFG's decision to stop paying the salaries of MPs who have not been in Mogadishu for sessions of Parliament. In his interview, "Madobe" brushed aside suggestions that the MPs could not remain in Mogadishu because of the danger, noting that "it is not fair that some (MPs) stay in the country to share the difficulties and problems with their people while others continue to spread propaganda against their government (from outside Somalia)." The TFG leadership's decision to oust or put on notice constant critics like "Bubah," Gedi, and Abshire reflects a growing impatience both with absenteeism and with those attempting to undermine an already weak government from within. Unfortunately, the decision does not seem even-handed, as many other MPs have also not attended sessions of Parliament for four months, and yet were not sanctioned. "Madobe's" implication in the interview that an MP can lose his seat for calling into question the unity of Somalia does not seem to be borne out by a reading of the Transitional Federal Charter. There are signs as well that President Sharif (septel) is becoming increasingly impatient with TFG cabinet members who are behaving like some of their counterparts in the Parliament.
RANNEBERGER